

International Military Student Badge Ceremony

Class 2009-1

LTG William B. Caldwell, IV

Eisenhower Auditorium – Fort Leavenworth, KS

11 JUN 09

To all our distinguished guests, faculty, and students, families and friends and especially our international sponsors – thank you for joining us today. As you all know, this year was a first for many different reasons for this CGSC class...first MMAS earned by a Warrant Officer, first class to present an Interagency Award for Excellence, but most relevant to today's ceremony, as you heard Mr. Fain mention, is the first International Military Student from Montenegro, MAJ Dokovic, bringing our number of representative countries to 155...we are looking forward to continuing an educational partnership with Montenegro for years to come.

To our sponsor families, thank you for opening your homes and lives to these officers and their families. This experience is always regarded as one of the highlights of their experience at Fort Leavenworth.

And to all our families – this day is as much, if not more, about you. It is the sacrifice and support of our families that empowers us all – thank you for what you do.

This is a great day for our International Military Students and their families. You've had a great year, and you are probably excited about what the future holds for your next assignment. It has been an honor for us to have served with you.

Today's badge ceremony marks the 101st year that International Military Students have graduated from the United States Army Command and General Staff College.

To include the class graduating tomorrow, 7188 international military students have crossed this college's stage. As we already mentioned, that remarkable body has included representatives of 155 nations...and that's out of a total of a little over 190 countries in the entire world.

As you all know, more than 50% of our international graduates have achieved the rank of general officer; over 300 have become senior leaders and representatives of their governments; and another 300 have reached their nations' highest military positions, and 28 of our International Military Student graduates have gone on to become heads of state.

Without question this college has seen the world's best and brightest leaders pass through its doors. Their participation in our college has contributed greatly to the strength of our alliances and to the professional development of our officer corps. Many of you have, or will serve alongside us in various parts of the world.

Each of you, by virtue of your education and demonstrated professionalism, will be asked to lead in an environment where we will face hybrid threats and ill defined adversaries.

The critical and creative thinking skills you have developed here will be essential as you rejoin your organizations across the globe as leaders...leaders who will be faced with ambiguous and complex problems that require innovative solutions.

As we all know, 21st Century problems cannot be solved by 20th Century thinking. These problems demand agile and adaptive leaders who are courageous enough to see and exploit opportunities in the challenges and complexities of the future.

You all seated here today, are...the courageous agile and adaptive leaders of the 21st Century...you are the essential critical and creative thinkers that, over the past 10 months, have completed an education that emphasized not what to think, but how to think...an education that stressed the importance of 2nd and 3rd order effects...and an education that recognizes the military is necessary...but by itself, it is not sufficient to meet future challenges.

Your development as a leader does not end today...it is a life-long process.

Students in our classrooms get to interact daily for almost a year with the finest officers in the world. At the end of their year at CGSC...meals are shared, holidays are spent together, close friendships developed, and students have broken down stereotypes about each other. Our international program here would rival any public diplomacy program in the world. This class of international military students has continued the proud tradition of academic scholarship. Among you, 4 have earned Master's degrees from various civilian universities and 15 have earned a Master in Military Arts and Sciences from CGSC.

You are about to join the ranks of an extremely distinguished group of previous international military student graduates. We have the benefit of hosting the International Hall of Fame Ceremony twice a year here where we recognize previous CGSC international graduates who go on to become the highest ranking member of their Armies, some become the leaders of their countries. General Kayani, Chief of the Army for Pakistan is the most recent inductee in a long line of distinguished international graduates that are shaping the future security environment. Statistically we know that seated in this room today there are several distinguished international students that will be back here some day as International Hall of Fame inductees.

The badge you receive today is rich in symbolism and recognizes you as the best of your nation... As you probably read in your bulletin, the badge has 12 bright and 12 dark sunflower leave shaped curves signifying the 12 months of day and night study that the average International Military Student spends earning a diploma...for some it may signify the 12 barbeques had or the 12 close friendships you created while here...you continue the legacy of over 100 years of tradition: A tradition of friendship and alliances forged during the tough academic environment found here at Fort Leavenworth.

I trust your time here was professionally rewarding, and I hope that you found it personally enriching as well. We like to say that the year an officer and his family spend at Fort Leavenworth is “the best year of your life”. For many, it is an opportunity to reconnect with family after years spent on deployments or in jobs which demand all our time and attention. It is also a time to grow with peers who have come from all over our military – and in your case – the world.

Many of you brought your families with you, and they became part of our community. Your children attended school with our children. Some of your families increased in size this year; our congratulations to the new fathers from Taiwan, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Australia on the births of their children – to each of you, congratulations! I hope you got plenty of rest while you were here. You’re going to need it.

It also looks like you had some fun while here...you were able to visit some historic places...places some people that live in the United States may never visit but only read about...places like Gettysburg and Washington D.C. as well as the Eisenhower and Truman Libraries – a significant year for both of these, the 65th Anniversary of Eisenhower’s D-Day decision and the 125th anniversary of Truman’s birth.

As I have said, your badge represents a long tradition. It is a tradition of achievement and of service. You represent the best from each of your armies, and you have demonstrated this excellence here.

While your achievements have been great, it is important to remember why you came here and what is expected of you. You are your nation’s future leaders – when you return home you will lead Soldiers and defend your homelands.

As you leave I would like you to remember four things...

- You came to learn from your peers around the world so that – with an open mind – you could take the best of what others have to offer and apply it to your leadership abilities and technical competence.
- You came to share your knowledge and wisdom with others so that they might benefit from your experience.
- You came here to grow as a servant-leader; a leader who puts the needs of his country and his Soldiers above his own.
- You came here to make a difference...so go from here and make a difference in your nations.

Collectively, you represent 62 countries. Some of your countries are at peace; a peace won at the cost of your vigilance. Some of you live in countries in the midst of conflict where hopes of peace will literally rest on your shoulders.

We all live in world that is experiencing dramatic change. Globalization has shrunk our world to the point where nations can no longer live in isolation. Therefore, as soldiers... and citizens of the world... we must think about our neighbors and serve as examples for them.

It has been a tremendous honor to have served with you as your Commandant. Our sincerest congratulations on your great accomplishment, and we wish you and your families the best as you return to your nations.

All of us here at Fort Leavenworth and the Command and General Staff College have benefitted greatly from knowing you and working with you...What an incredible year this has been – and will always be remembered – Congratulations!